



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The Montana WWAMI program has made numerous changes in recent years to increase the number of students who return to Montana to practice medicine. Due to the length of medical education – a minimum of 4 years in medical school and 3 years in residency – any change to improve retention rates takes a minimum of 7 years to see results. Changes WWAMI has made:

TRUST

In 2009, Montana WWAMI enrolled its first Montana TRUST (Targeted Rural Underserved Track) students. TRUST is an initiative aimed at inspiring students to return to the rural and underserved areas of Montana. It currently enrolls 5 students out of each class of 20.

The TRUST program uniquely trains students for rural practice in Montana through the following:

- The summer before their first year, TRUST students spend two weeks with a physician in a rural community that they will return to over the next four years.
- Students visit the rural community and work with the physician twice during their first year.
- During the summer between their first and second year, students spend four weeks in the community for their RUOP, Rural/Underserved Opportunities Program.
- During their third year, students return for a 20-week WRITE rotation (WWAMI Rural Integrated Teaching Experience), which includes clinical experiences in most elements of primary care from family medicine, to psychiatry, to pediatrics, to internal medicine.
- After graduation, WWAMI offers students opportunities to do their residency in rural areas.

WRITE

The WRITE (WWAMI Rural Integrated Training Experience) program, which places students in rural/ underserved clinics for five months of education, was recently expanded to 7 sites in Montana.

Third and fourth year training expansion

Since 2005, the number of required third and fourth year training sites in Montana has expanded from 7 to 33 involving 11 Montana communities.

Montana Track

The Montana Track program initiated in 2008 will train 5 students in Missoula and 5 students in Billings for the entirety of their third year in 2012-2013.

MRPIP

On top of the \$28,000 per year Montana students pay in tuition while at the University of Washington, they also pay a surcharge of \$4,800 per year to fund the Montana Rural Physician Incentive Program (MRPIP), which provides up to \$100,000 in medical education loan repayment over 5 years to physicians who practice in rural and underserved locations Montana. The amount was raised from \$45,000 in 2009.

Graduate Medical Residency Expansion

Proposed expansion of Graduate Medical Residence slots in Montana is likely to improve the retention of WWAMI students. Montana has historically suffered from a lack of available 3-year residency slots, but where those slots have been available, more than 70 percent of physicians remained in that community to practice after their residency. With recent and future changes, Montana could shift from historically only having 6 slots per cohort to 78 slots spread between Billings and Missoula.

WWAMI RETURNS

The third and fourth year clinical training opportunities in Montana attract WWAMI students originating elsewhere in the region, as well as Montana students, resulting in a 55 percent overall return rate, or approximately 11 WWAMI trained physicians per year returning to Montana to practice medicine. This is far better than the national average return rate of 39 percent for publically funded medical schools.